

THE RABBIT-PROOF FENCE: A POSTCOLONIAL METAPHOR

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Abstract:

To be on the fence with something is to be neither cold nor hot, neither black nor white. The fence is a greyspace that distinguishes itself from the two sides that it stands as a division for. The fence holds in the essence its being qualities of both the parties that it stands between and more often than not, it is symbolic of a conflict rather than being a mediator. Molly, Daisy and Gracie in Doris Pilkington's Rabbit Proof Fence take on a role of being both a mediator and a reason of conflict. Just as the rabbit-proof fence stands between the humans and the intrusive rabbits, the half-caste children stand between the white settlers and their aboriginal community.

Keywords: *Metaphor, fence, Pilkington, postcolonial, aboriginal, Australian, cartography.*

This paper will attempt to outline the rabbit-proof fence as a metaphor while also enunciating the role that half-caste children play in living that metaphor. The study will be carried forward in light of colonial and postcolonial theories of *othering*, wherein the cartographic consequences are explored and explained as a means of enhancing the colonizer's regime.

Doris Pilkington's *Rabbit Proof Fence* narrates the escape story of three young girls from a settlement school for half-caste Aborigine children they were forced to attend in Australia, over one thousand miles away from their families and homes. The government considered these children a step above full-blooded Aborigine children and felt obliged to take them to schools where they could be educated. These youngsters were unceremoniously snatched from their families and carted off to these settlements.

Molly, Gracie and Daisy are the three young women who are at the center of the story. They were gambling being recouped and rebuked. Any person who endeavored to escape was set in the "boob" or jail, beaten with a tie, had their heads shaved and were given simply bread and water for seven days. Molly was educated that no one had ever adequately escaped. Nevertheless, Molly was undeterred. She was settled that she and her little partners would return to the people who loved and considered them.

The young ladies strolled barefooted through thick woodlands and wide shrublands with the steady risk of being recovered by the watches that had been conveyed searching for them. They turned out to be exceptionally clever and make it home to their families who, however dazed that they made significant progress, were extremely upbeat to have their girls back home. The trek crosswise over Australia is one of the longest in the written history of the nation and surely the longest that was cultivated barefooted.

This paper will attempt to explain the fence as a metaphor for the division between the Aborigine and the white settlers of Australia, with the half-caste children as the fence that stands between the two communities.

We first observe the fence, from an aerial point of view, toward the start of the film, when the title shows up and again on the 'ration-day' scene at the Jigalong warehouse comes after we see the ladies and youngsters out chasing in the hedge. How the fence comes into view each time is essential. Seen from the storage facility, the fence is a site for setting up various arrangements of directions. One of the youngsters, Gracie, tells a white maintenance labourer that the opposite side of the fence is outside the allotted boundaries to him, as it may be 'women's country', in this manner building up various regions partitioned

by the fence. The primary character who will make the epic adventure that the film describes, Molly, asks the labourer 'Where your country?', to which he answers, 'Down south', pointing down the fence line. Daisy, the most youthful of the three kids, offers an announcement now saying that their dad takes a shot at the rabbit-proof fence. This fortifies the data given in past subtitled content and voice-over account by Molly in the underlying presentation, on the other hand in the scene where the station supervisor and policeman distinguish the kids as being 'half-caste' and of nomad paternity.

“Tracing 'the fence' and 'the journey' into the landscape as projections, they can be re-looked at in terms of bodily identification and the film's documentation of forensic evidence. The film shifts the viewer's consciousness of histories and awareness of the politics of dispossession, yet sentimentalises in part via its approach to storytelling.” (Cain 298)

As the story advances, the focal picture of the title demonstrates to a great degree valuable. The fence, the longest on the planet, was worked to fend off the rabbits from the farmland, to isolate the wild from the cultivated. The hindrance reflects the fear of miscegenation. The fence, which Molly observes outside her home, and later perceives close to the school, turns into a favourable power, her guide for going home. Walls are an image of impediment on opportunity. The main thing the white men did, they assembled the incredible wall of Australia, at that point overwhelmed native individuals, and put them behind new fences in new reservations. Walls helped the white men to deny them of their opportunity, demolish their way of life and influence them to pursue the white men's guidelines. This illustration represents the hindrance that estranges Indigenous Australians from the White Australians. This represents the idea of estrangement which is basically the inverse of having a place. Incidentally, in the motion picture, this rabbit-proof fence goes about as a guide for the heroes and interface them with their parent where the feeling of having a place can be considered.

Molly, Gracie and Daisy can be looked at in the light of the metaphor above. The children who are borne of a white father and an Aboriginal mother are the “great fences of Australia” that, in their division of the two populations, stand as nomads in their identity. Further, the half-caste children are in fact the rabbit-proof fence that obstructs the rabbits that is the oppressing power of the white settlers by taking the brunt on behalf of the aboriginal community.

As described in Pilkington's story, the rabbit-proof fence has a variety of connotations both figuratively and symbolically. To the political authorities, it was a protection from the intrusive rabbit population. Pilkington however opines that this was a very typical fashion of the whites in responding to a problem they have created to be as optimistic about it so they don't have to blame themselves later on. For the local Aboriginal people the fence carried a different symbolism, and representing security for their loving homes and to the children in Pilkington narrative. Pilkington likewise takes note of that *Mardudjara* individuals moving from the desert area utilized the rabbit-proof fence as a geographic marker.

The fence is a beyond its physical existence as it the Jigalong settlement. In the film it is doubly iconic of a non-Aboriginal topographic sense of the history of colonial imposition marking the marginal line for various interactions between settlers and indigenous people and it is indexically a cartographic/geographical reference point for northsouth coordinates by which Molly Craig finds a way home. That is, back to the community located at the Jigalong government depot: 'the desert outpost of the white man'.

“The imperative to map is colonial. Cartography takes as its primary reference point the heart of the colonial empire. It transforms unique relationships associated with particular areas of land into part of a global whole. Indigenous laws and customs, on the other hand, are based on relationships between country and people that defy an international context. They predate inscriptions of a southern continent onto maps of the world. They precede circumnavigation, the drawing of state boundaries, and standard topographical map series.

Therefore, the basis of native title is foreign to the assumptions of maps used to delineate its boundaries.” (Reilly 3)

The establishment of local title in Indigenous laws and traditions and its cartographic portrayal are separated by a large epistemological gap. Howitt and Suchet depict how confidence in an outside, regular scene has caught geographers and others in a 'lobby of mirrors' in which each reflection is an impression of a non-Indigenous perspective of land. Indigenous perspectives are just perceived to the degree that they reflect non-Indigenous understandings of the land.

In light of Postcolonial theories, there is a strong sense of *othering* amongst the Australian white settlers and the native Aboriginals. *Othering* involves two concepts: the 'exotic other' and the 'demonic other'. The exotic other represents a fascination with the inherent dignity and beauty of the primitive/undeveloped; while the demonic other is represented as inferior, negative, savage and evil. In colonialism, the “colonizing Other is established at the same time as its colonized others are produced as subjects” (Ashcroft 171). For example, as colonizers build themselves as isolated from and distinctive to the colonized, they are additionally developing themselves inside a provincial talk that empowers them to perceive themselves as the colonizer. In this way, when the white pioneers make colonial discourses, they construct not only denotations about indigenous peoples but also about being Anglo-Australians.

“Othering' a culture in this way established the colonisers' cultures and worldview as normal and natural. It is the process through which 'colonial discourse produces its subjects.’” (Ashcroft 171)

From a colonial viewpoint indigenous Australians are restricted to certain settings. These include the possibility that indigenous Australians can be homogenized into a collective 'they'; that 'they' can be recognized through their dissimilarity to standard culture and 'their' discrepancies are established in 'their' fascinating societal practices.

Pilkington's story truly exemplifies the metaphor that we have attempted to bring out in this essay. The title itself encapsulates a strong implication towards the inequality, the imbalance, the differences between the White settlers and the Aborigines. It is the cartography of the mind that is essential at the end of the day wherein the fence is built in the mental state of both communities by which the white settlers believe that there are on the privileged side and the aborigines believe they are on the oppressed one.

References

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